

HABS
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Roanoke Municipal Building and Annex
(Courthouse and Municipal Building)
216 Campbell Ave., S.W. and 215 Church
Ave., N.W.
Roanoke (Independent City)
Virginia

HABS No. VA-35

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20240

1915 Structure1969 Structure

Name: Roanoke Municipal Building
but now called
Courthouse

Roanoke Municipal Building Annex
now called
Municipal Building

Location: 216 Campbell Ave., S. W.

215 Church Ave., S. W.

See Map

Owner: City of Roanoke

Occupant: City of Roanoke and some state offices relating to municipal affairs such as courts, general registrar and constitutional officers

Use: Municipal Administration and Services

Significance: The Municipal Complex area (Courthouse, Municipal Building, Police Station, Jail, and Court Facility now being built) symbolize the steady growth and progress of the City. It also reflects the centralization of city offices, enhancing efficiency and creating an environment where cooperation between departments is facilitated. Also in the early seventies, the City structure was reorganized pulling together departments with common factors. A director who reports to the City Manager was placed over each of these clusters.

Architecturally, the significance of these buildings is their harmony. The 1915 neo-classical revival structure was common of government architecture of the time. The 1969 municipal building repeats and reflects the basic design elements of the older structure. The new jail and court facility and even the renovation of the buildings for the police station harmonize with the new municipal building to the extent that scale, texture, materials and design elements all blend to create a modern, clean and efficient image.

The City of Roanoke is creating an impressive center of local government services and administration.

General History

The City of Roanoke was founded in 1882 and the first Municipal Building, 3-story Victorian, was opened in 1887. By the early 1900's, the City government required more space for its operation. In 1907, a site was selected and purchased which was on Campbell Avenue, S.W., between Second and Third Streets, next to the old building and partially on the same location. Plans were drawn in 1913 and on October 27, 1914, ground was broken. Although there was no formal ground-breaking ceremony, more than a hundred people watched the first excavations.

Construction continued through 1915 and in the early months of 1916, finishing touches were done--lights, chairs, decorating, etc. In late March, City offices moved to the new building with the first court case tried there on March 24. On March 25, the old building was auctioned in parcels for a total of \$922.50, an embarrassment at the time.

Although the City alderman had authorized the expenditure of \$150 on March 13, 1916, to cover costs of a celebration, the official opening was not held until July 4, 1916. It was felt that since there had been no cornerstone-laying ceremony, that the dedication should be a large, festive celebration. And it was! A parade with 5,000 participants and an estimated 50,000 viewers led the way to the City auditorium for speeches and singing. James A. Bear, Chairman of the Public Property Committee which oversaw construction, presented the building's key to Mayor Charles N. Broun. Confederate soldiers were the first honored guests to tour the facility and thousands followed throughout the day.

Description

The 1915 building was designed by Frye and Chesterman. Total cost of this facility was \$218,900. E. G. Frye continued to practice in Roanoke and his descendents are still involved in the construction business today. Chesterman

returned to Lynchburg after working on this building and three other Roanoke projects.

King Lumber Company of Charlottesville was the contractor but this company went broke and work was completed by Bonding and Surety Company of Roanoke. Pauly Jail Building Company of St. Louis, Missouri, oversaw the design and construction of the jail portion of the building. An interesting note is that four years after the jail opened, four inmates escaped by sawing through the bars; the jail equipment supplier had not provided case-hardened steel as specified.

Roanoke's courthouse is neo-classical revival, typical of federal and local government construction in the early 20's. With three-story Ionic and Corinthian pilasters and a terra-cotta cornice with angels at the corners, this building achieved the effect of grandeur and majesty that was desired. A newspaper critic called it "modern and pretentious...a striking example of its Roanoke stability, progressiveness and prosperity."

This H shaped building has both interior and exterior brick bearing walls. The floors are made from concrete slab except for those with heavy public traffic which are finished with terrazzo. The floors in the courtrooms are made of wood. The exterior trim is limestone and brick with the terra cotta cornice.

The interior of the courtrooms are heavily decorated with columns, pilasters, and ornate ceilings. The two end courtrooms have mahogany trim, while the central courtroom has oak. There was a skylight in the central courtroom which has since been covered. The arrangement was designed to allow movement from courtroom to courtroom without entering the hallway.

Use

Three of the five stories of the 1915 building were for municipal services. while the top two floors housed the City jail which had its own entrance. An interesting note is that the original boot strap elevator serving the jail is one of the few remaining and is in good shape.

The first floor had the police court and detention area, Police Department, Police dormitory, and Trial and Issuing Justice area.

The second or main floor had the Mayor's office, City Clerk, Health Department, Solicitator, Engineer, Treasurer and Collector, and Commissioner of Revenue.

The third floor housed the Council Chambers, Grand Jury Room, Commonwealth's Attorney, Corporation Courtroom, Law and Chancery Court, and Clerk of Courts.

The fourth floor for the jail had 34 cells and a kitchen. Six cells for female prisoners were on the fifth floor, along with 34 more cells for male prisoners.

The Courthouse was the center of municipal activities from the time it was built through 1970 when the adjacent municipal building opened. At this time most municipal services, excluding judiciary-related offices, moved. The Council and Council appointed officers and staff moved to the new building along with the Treasurer, Commissioner of Revenue and Office of Real Estate Valuation. The Police Department moved across Third Street to a facility renovated for its use along with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. In 1979, a new jail opened west of the Police station on Campbell Avenue. A new courthouse is in the process of being constructed just south of the Police station and will be connected to the jail. When the courts vacate the 1916 courthouse building, it is planned that it will be renovated. Social Services offices, now spread throughout downtown in rented property, will probably relocate there

Municipal Annex

In July, 1967, the City of Roanoke engaged the Architectural-Engineering-Planning firm of Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern to design the Municipal Building Annex which houses administrative offices for the City of Roanoke, Virginia. The building is rectangular, approximately 69 feet x 224 feet, four stores, with a mechanical penthouse. The Annex connects directly to the existing Municipal

Building. The height, scale and materials of the Annex are designed to be either compatible with or match the existing building. The exterior materials are precast light colored concrete and glazed white brick. The structural frame is poured in place concrete. Flexibility was designed into the interior. Wall partitions define the various functional areas and may be relocated on a regular module. The emergency operating center located in the basement is designed as a fallout shelter. Bids for construction were received on 15 August 1968. John W. Daniels & Co., Inc., low bid of \$2,219,700 was accepted and the construction was completed in July, 1970. The partner-in-charge was E. Paul Hayes and the Project Manager was J. Oliver Stein

When the new courthouse opens in our centennial year, 1982, the municipal complex will be completed. The surrounding area has been landscaped including a plaza in front of the south side of main entrance to the new Municipal Building.

Sources

Most of the information was obtained through clippings from the Roanoke Times and World News newspapers; John M. Thompson, local architect and successor of Frye and Chesterman; John Chappellear, local architect; the original linen drawings of the 1916 courthouse; original plans for the 1970 Municipal Building; and scattered records and notes in the City Clerk's office and the City Manager's office.

Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern
ARCHITECTS • ENGINEERS • PLANNERS

A&E Commission No. 3260
Dated: 25 September 1975

TITLE: Roanoke Municipal Building
CLIENT: City of Roanoke, Virginia
BID DATE: 15 August 1968
A&E ESTIMATE: \$2,288,000
CONTRACT PRICE: \$2,219,700
FINAL COST: \$2,229,348
FLOOR AREA: 72,198 sq. ft.

DESCRIPTION: This 4 story building is constructed in a restricted central business district site. The building ties physically with the existing Municipal Building and faces the Central Post Office across Lee Plaza. Both of the older buildings are well designed examples of classic architecture and considerable judgement was exercised in the adjustment of scale, proportion, and the selection of materials to achieve maximum compatibility between the new design and the older environment.

Construction is reinforced concrete with brick and precast concrete exterior facing. The City Emergency Operating Center at the lowest level is designed as a fallout shelter with a protection factor of 100.

The building is completely air conditioned with individual room control. The heating system includes capacity to back-feed the existing Municipal Building.

The electrical system features a fluorescent modular lighting system, emergency lighting, and a complete raceway system for State and City communications' systems including two diesel generators for back-up emergency power.

Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern
ARCHITECTS • ENGINEERS • PLANNERS

A&E Commission No. 3260
Dated: 25 September 1975
Page Two

Reference:

Mr. Byron E. Haner
City Manager
Municipal Building
Roanoke, Virginia 24011

Courthouse and Municipal Building

Interior Features

All corridors and entranceway floors are Terrazzo with terrazzo base. The ceilings are broken up with decorative plaster beams.

The two main stairways have marble treads and risers, with a marble wainscot and wide marble rail dividing the stairs.

All courtrooms are finished in oak. The Judge's bench, the jury box are of oak with an oak wainscot and base. The center courtroom on the third floor has been richly treated with the above treatment and in addition it has free standing oak columns, oak paneling and a rather ornate oak cornice. The ceiling is done very tastefully with false plaster beams that frame a rather large sky light, all of which makes for a very rich, tastefully decorated room.

Municipal Building Annex

Interior Features

The design of this building interior was for flexibility. All interior areas can be divided on a five foot module. Consequently, most of the interior finishes are metal stud and drywall.

The corridors are fixed with the walls being treated with vinyl fabric to withstand the abuse.

The Council Chamber is one of the few permanent rooms in the building. The side walls are covered with rolling movable panels to accommodate maps, reports, displays, etc. being presented to Council. These panels are functional however and not decorative.

The data was prepared by J. Oliver Stein, architect with Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern of Roanoke for the Municipal Building Annex and the Engineering Office of the City of Roanoke for the original building.